



Testimony of the Connecticut AFL-CIO
Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee

February 18th, 2014

Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

I am Lori Pelletier and I serve as the Executive Secretary- Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO. I am here to testify on behalf of the 900 affiliated local unions who represent 200,000 working men and women from every city and town in our great state on the following.

S.B. No. 32 AN ACT CONCERNING WORKING FAMILIES' WAGES – We support this legislation. We applaud the announcement by Governor Malloy to increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour. Every nickel going into the paychecks of working men and women gets spent in our economy. Raising the minimum wage boosts spending which creates demand which creates jobs. It's really simple economics. A job should lift someone out of poverty, not trap them in it. We encourage moving this proposal rapidly through the process so these hard working men and women can get the raise they so desperately need.

S.B. No. 56 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SEVERE MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL IMPAREMENT AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE – We support this legislation. PTSD is a harsh reality of our current world. Workers who experience PTSD as a result of work are no different than workers who have torn ACL's as a result of work, except that the injury is to the whole body inside and out. Workers may not be dying of black lung in the numbers they were, but events which cause PTSD are on the rise and workers should be compensated for those injuries.

S.B. No. 57 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE DIRECT DEPOSIT OF WAGES – We support this legislation. This bill prevents workers from losing their exempt wages.

S.B. 58 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING AN INCREASE IN PENALTIES DUE TO FALSE OR MISLEADING DECLARATIONS, STATEMENTS OR DECLARATIONS – We support this legislation.

S.B. No. 60 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYEE WORKING CONDITIONS – We support this legislation.

S.B. No. 63 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING TIMETABLES FOR BINDING ARBITRATION AWARDS. We oppose this legislation. For decades municipalities have raised this as the reason for their budgets being out of balance. Anyone who is familiar with the timelines understand where the real costs are, and until city and towns chief elected officials are willing to take on the role of chief negotiator and stop hiring the armies of outside high-priced law firms we will continue to see this red herring.

H.B. No. 5066 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN WORKERS' RIGHT TO COLLECTIVELY BARGAIN We support this legislation. When the National Labor Relations Act was signed into law some of the jurisdiction on which employees should have the right to collectively bargain was left up to the states. Over the years we have worked to eliminate these exemptions and extend to all Connecticut residents the freedom of assembly. This bill is another step toward recognizing the value and worth of all workers. Regardless of your occupation, if there are three or more employees the right to collectively bargain should be yours for the asking. All work should be respected as should all workers, and the right to collectively bargain is about respect and dignity on the job.

When Dr. King got assassinated in 1968 he was in Memphis because the Sanitation workers wanted respect. People treated them as second (or even third) class citizens, like property. The "I AM A MAN" signs carried by those vital municipal employees were as poignant to them as they would be if farm workers carried them today. I have had numerous conversations regarding this issue, and it is of great distress to me that there is more concern about the cows on the farm than the very workers who take care of them.

The right to collectively bargain does not put companies out of business, poor management does. The right to collectively bargain does however provide workers with a voice on their job independent of the bosses. I am proud of the work done here by my predecessors to ensure that workers have the ability to bargain collectively, now is the time to continue that work and in turn give workers a much needed voice on the job.

H.B. No. 5071 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CIVIL ACTIONS AGAINST AN EMPLOYER FOR FAILURE TO PAY WAGES OR COMPENSATION OR MAKE PAYMENTS TO AN EMPLOYEE WELFARE FUND – We support this legislation. In this economy with high unemployment, bad employers are often found exploiting workers by failing to pay them their proper wage. This penalty should deter employers from taking such risky and hurtful action.

We appreciate the committee holding this public hearing.

Respectfully,

Lori J. Pelletier

Executive Secretary- Treasurer, Connecticut AFL-CIO